

## **Update from NDOR Local Projects Section – November 21, 2008**

On October 6, 2008, Mr. John Craig, the Director of the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR), sent a letter to all local public agencies (LPAs) in the State, stressing the urgency of recent and further changes to the LPA Program at NDOR. A new LPA Manual and LPA Training Program, along with increased State and federal oversight of LPA projects, will soon be evident to many local public agencies. According to Mr. Craig, refinement of LPA administrative procedures is currently the highest priority of the Department. NDOR continues to work diligently toward its improvement goals, however, necessary programmatic changes may continue to cause unavoidable delay for many local road, street and bridge projects throughout the State.

A comprehensive procedure manual for LPAs, using Federal-aid on local highway and bridge projects, is nearing completion. A draft of the new LPA Manual is due for final review by FHWA on November 14, 2008. The LPA Manual is scheduled to be complete, and available on NDOR's website by January 30, 2009. Planning is also underway for a new mandatory LPA Training Program, which will begin in February, 2009. Possibilities for the core requirements of the program include completion of Federal-Aid 101, LPA Manual training sessions, ROW training, and environmental classes. Other course offerings may include classes such as contract administration and ethics.

The new LPA Manual will also describe in detail the improved quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) and monitoring policies required for all future LPA projects. The features of the QA/QC and monitoring programs are currently under development. Preliminary on-site audits of LPA project files are already in progress. The goal of the preliminary audits is to better understand the file organization, contents and local agency procedures used for a sample of completed and in-progress local Federal-aid projects. This information will be used in development of further guidelines, tools and training to help improve local project delivery by NDOR and LPAs.

The Local Projects Section of NDOR is looking forward to the addition of two new members to their team. The additional staff will serve as environmental specialists, assisting the Section and LPAs with environmental issues. They will be charged with helping the LPA to ensure project compliance with State and Federal environmental regulations.

Other environmental support documents for use by LPAs are also being developed. The NEPA Determination Form, the Categorical Exclusion Document, along with Guidance for each, have been in the process for quite some time, and are nearing completion. A new Environmental Procedures Manual is also a high priority for NDOR.

Many changes are taking place at NDOR relating to administration of local projects. These improvements will take considerable time, effort and patience on the part of the local agencies. NDOR will continue to try to keep projects moving forward during this transition period. If you have questions about any of this information, please contact the NDOR Local Projects Engineer, Mr. Jim Wilkinson, at (402) 479-4607.